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## SOURCE

**Hedong Kongnon.**

# WHY I LEFT NORTH KOREA

Kim So-kyong

Now, I can walk the streets of Seoul as a free man. But I cannot forget the streets in Ch'ongjin City where I lived until only a month ago. I cannot help but recall how I and others used to listen to the radio broadcast from Seoul under the quilt-cover in order to avoid the eyes of Communist police. Even while under the cover my hair stood on end and goose pimples covered my body.

Posters such as "Long live our brilliant leader Gen Kim Il-sung" and "Long live the world's liberator of all oppressed people, Generalissimo Stalin" and their portraits, which are always kept brightly floodlighted, are hung in every street and alley. In addition, some kind of propaganda speeches are always carried over the PA system until late every night, so that the tired workers are unable to get enough sleep.

The land reform of 1946 has become a symbol of suffering so far as the farmers are concerned. On the surface, the 25 percent of the harvest as a partial payment on the land does not seem too much. The fact is, however, that the 25 percent which was fixed at the time of land assignment must be met by the individual farmer every year even though the farmers may have lost their entire crop either by drought or flood. This means that in the event of natural disaster the farmers have to buy the officially fixed amount of grain (25 percent) to pay the tax if they desire to hold the land. But that is not all. There is also what is known as tax on in-stock goods. In short, the 25 percent tax usually amounted up to 70 - 80 percent of the harvest. I witnessed many people going to state farms or state fisheries under a contract running 2 - 3 years in order to get just a bushel of rice or 2,000 - 3,000 won for the family. This is what the Communists call equality.

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Koreans in the North cannot discuss issues such as this in the open because under the so-called normal civil laws, gathering of more than two persons without advance authorization is considered a violation. I knew one old gentleman who every night used to walk about 2 miles over very rugged mountain trails to the city to listen to the radio broadcast from Seoul. One night, upon his return from the city, he found his home had been completely wrecked by the Communist police. People cannot gather even on the side of the road in North Korea.

I was offered a teaching position in Kyongsong City, Hamgyong Pukto, which I accepted for two reasons: to support a family of six, and to keep the spirit of the students alive as much as possible. The school I went to teach in was no exception. The Communist elements dominated both the teaching staff and student body. If any one was found to have his own political thoughts he was immediately dismissed from the school. One of my students, who was selected to make a speech on the occasion of anniversary of the People's Army, said in his speech, "The People's Army is Soviet Army Jr." He was expelled from the school the same day. Another student said, "Grains harvested in Korea are being shipped to the Soviet Union every day through Ch'ongjin Port. How can the Soviet Union be a liberator of the oppressed people when she does this kind of thing?" That student is behind bars now.

Members of the teaching staff are required to come one-half hour early every morning and report to the office of the school head for daily instructions. Teachers return to their home, if early, at about 2100, but they usually return home about midnight. We have seen too much of the Red ghost in the North. School children are more afraid of school authorities than of the police.

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